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SUBJECT: DAS MERKEL'S MEETING WITH DUMA CHAIRMAN KOSACHEV

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel A. Russell. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) In a June 19 meeting, DAS Merkel and Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachev discussed missile defense, NATO enlargement, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and the EU, and Russia's foreign policy structure. DAS Merkel briefed Kosachev on the status of missile defense talks. NATO dominated the discussion, with Kosachev arguing that it added little to existing security cooperation against common threats such as Iran, North Korea and Afghanistan, but would damage Russia's bilateral relations with Ukraine and Georgia. He criticized Saakashvili's failure to address the needs of the Abkhaz. Kosachev was more positive on the Transnistria conflict, praising Voronin for his willingness to take Russia's interest in Moldovan neutrality into account. For the upcoming Russia - EU summit, Kosachev urged all EU states to put collective interests before their bilateral grievances against Russia. Kosachev shed no light on the state of the foreign policy decision making process with Medvedev at the helm. End summary.

Missile Defense and Information Sharing

¶2. (C) Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachev opened a June 19 meeting with DAS Merkel with the latest press "sensation;" the report of Lithuania's offer to host facilities for U.S. missile defense deployment, and asked about the status of negotiations on missile defense. DAS Merkel replied that there had been no breakthrough but the talks had become more focused and concrete. He emphasized an open and transparent process, with a role for all parties, especially those where facilities might be located. Kosachev warned against any form of "game playing" and urged regular information sharing.

¶3. (C) Kosachev lamented that the Russian public and parliamentarians remained unaware that the U.S. and Russia cooperate well in areas such as counterterrorism. The result was a widespread anti-U.S. sentiment, that affected the bilateral relationship. DAS Merkel underscored the need for GOR representatives to articulate the value of cooperation with the U.S. He urged Kosachev not to lose important time during the transitional period in the U.S.

¶4. (C) DAS Merkel noted that with a long "to-do list" such as the 123 agreement, WTO negotiations, and the Jackson-Vanick Amendment, ahead, Kosachev's recent Washington consultations were well-timed and contributed to Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Berman's deeper understanding of bilateral issues. Kosachev agreed, saying that a steady dialogue with no surprises would be of paramount importance. Kosachev said that Berman and he had agreed on a joint mission to Iran. DAS Merkel did not comment on a Berman-Kosachev trip, but recalled his early June meeting with former PM Primakov, and thought that concrete discussions on the Iranian issues were helpful.

Ukraine: All About NATO

15. (C) Kosachev criticized the U.S. for "pressuring Ukraine to join NATO." According to Kosachev, the GOR was also at the mercy of certain domestic forces. The result, Kosachev said, was a "dangerous game," which could create another mistake, as in 2004 when the U.S. and Russia rallied behind two different political groups in Ukraine. Noting that Ukraine was deeply divided on NATO, and that Ukrainian leaders could not even agree on a referendum, Kosachev thought that Ukraine should be "left alone" to decide its own fate. If Russia were "provoked" by U.S. meddling, it would have little choice but to get involved, Kosachev added. DAS Merkel maintained that there was no reason why Ukraine's NATO membership would close the door to cooperation with Russia. Instead, Ukraine could be a bridge between Europe and Russia. DAS Merkel noted that Germany's interpretation of MAP as the last door to NATO was not shared by the U.S. In sum, NATO members should be exporters, not consumers of security, and the MAP process was the toll to make them more stable, secure and, over time, more acceptable NATO applicants.

16. (C) DAS Merkel urged the GOR to undertake an effort to portray NATO as an alliance of shared values, not just a military alliance. Overemphasis on the military aspect of NATO vis-a-vis Ukraine and Georgia and aggressive rhetoric by Russian officials including FM Lavrov's speech at the Duma and the Duma debates only forced Ukraine and Georgia to take a precipitous decision. Kosachev admitted that Russia felt left out when more and more countries were admitted while Russia was excluded. Clearly, Russia would never be part of NATO, Kosachev said. Kosachev lamented that even in areas where the U.S. and Russia should and could cooperate well, such as Afghanistan, NATO was in the way. NATO limited cooperation rather than promoting it. NATO added little to efforts to promote joint security in Iran and North Korea while it "damaged" the overall atmosphere of cooperation. "Eighty percent of Ukrainians are against NATO membership, yet you pursue it. Doesn't that violate your principles of democracy?" Kosachev asked.

17. (C) Kosachev termed Ukraine, "a special case." Citing an example of a small border town near Rostov, where many residents cross the unmarked border daily, Kosachev asked, "What's going to happen to this town once Ukraine joins NATO?" According to him, border disputes will flare up and the bilateral relationship would be further damaged. Ukrainian firms that produce military materiel for the Russian military would suffer. Furthermore, the CFE would disappear once Ukraine enters NATO, Kosachev warned. The U.S.'s repeated argument that NATO enlargement was "not about Russia" simply was not convincing, especially for the Russian military, he added. DAS Merkel responded that nothing would happen in that small town unless Russia took action because Russia is not a threat to NATO, and NATO is about projecting force and addressing instability, not border protection. In response to DAS Merkel's question on Medvedev's reference to a European security structure in his June 5 Berlin speech, Kosachev said that the U.S. could not be excluded in any kind of a new structure. The only pan-European organization, the OSCE, does not function well on the two main issues of the day: energy security and Kosovo.

18. (C) Kosachev defended Moscow Mayor Luzhkov who claimed Russia's right to the Sevastopol naval base during his May 12 speech and was subsequently barred from entering Ukraine. Luzhkov was simply responding to pressure from the local population who greeted him with "Why do you leave us on our own?" "Sevastopol does not want to belong to Ukraine"; and "Crimea does not want to be part of NATO," Kosachev said.

Georgia: NATO and More

19. (C) Kosachev was not happy with what had happened in Russia - Georgia relations, terming the 80 percent support for the Georgian referendum on NATO membership "a defeat for Russia's foreign policy." After Kosovo's declaration of

independence, keeping Russia - Georgia relations rational was not possible. Kosachev maintained that many Duma deputies supported an even more aggressive policy against Georgia. After Kosovo, many thought there was no need to abide by international law.

¶10. (C) Kosachev argued that the biggest mistake made by the Georgian leadership was to deny the existence of the conflict itself and blame Russia for all of its ills. For the majority of the Abkhaz, Georgia's territorial integrity does not include Abkhazia. Kosachev warned that the worse scenario -- Georgia seeking a military solution -- would certainly bring Russia's intervention. Kosachev hoped that the railroad battalion would leave in 2-3 months; if not he would be disappointed at Russia's "inconsistency." He said that Russia had been a much better observer of international laws, considering that "you ignored UNSC resolutions in invading Iraq and did what you wanted to do in Kosovo."

Moldova

¶11. (C) Kosachev said that unlike Saakashvili, Voronin was ready to address the conflict itself and consider Russia's interests, including Moldova's neutrality. In response to DAS Merkel's question on whether the guarantee of neutrality in the Moldovan Constitution and the new National Security Strategy were sufficient, Kosachev said that it was acceptable as long as a mechanism prohibiting the amendment of the Constitution was instituted.

Russia-EU Summit

¶12. (C) Kosachev warned against attempts by EU member states to promote their bilateral issues with Russia through the EU. Despite the EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner's promise of no more surprises during her recent Moscow visit, Kosachev felt that some member states were not "adult enough" to put the collective interest before their bilateral grievances. In response to DAS Merkel's query on whether Russia sought common interests or common values with the EU, Kosachev concluded that the EU itself was divided on values, lacking commonality on such issues as prostitution, national minorities, drug use, and freedom of expression.

Foreign Policy Making in the New Structure

¶13. (C) DAS Merkel invited Kosachev to elaborate on the role of PM Putin and his new foreign policy advisor, former U.S. Ambassador Ushakov, in foreign policy decision making. Kosachev answered, "Read our Constitution," saying that President Medvedev would lead, but quickly added that, "Nobody knows, yet." Kosachev said that he once had Ushakov's position, which was purely administrative in nature. Presidential Administration Foreign Policy Advisor Prikhodko had suggested Ushakov's appointment, Kosachev said.
RUSSELL